

# South Dakota National Guard

## Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: [ng.sd.sdarnng.list.pao@mail.mil](mailto:ng.sd.sdarnng.list.pao@mail.mil)  
Web: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>  
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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Volunteers recognized for service to National Guard, Reserve**

By Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen  
SDNG Public Affairs Office

PIERRE, S.D. – Nineteen volunteers for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve received the President's Volunteer Service Award during an ESGR annual planning and awards meeting held in Pierre, Friday, Feb. 6.

The award recognizes, celebrates and inspires community service leaders and volunteers.

This past year the volunteers spent 5,126 hours of their personal time helping service members and employers throughout South Dakota, said South Dakota ESGR Chair Ron Mielke.

"ESGR volunteers give briefings to service members about the rights and responsibilities their employer has and what is required of service members to help develop a positive relationship between the two," said Mielke.

The volunteers also work with the service members to help recognize their supervisors for supporting their military careers with the Patriot Award or they can recognize their employer's entire organization with the Above and Beyond Award.

"These awards reflect the effort made by employers to support National Guard and Reserve members in various ways, such as providing flexible work schedules, time off prior to and after deployment or going above and beyond the legal requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act," said Mielke.

ESGR volunteers are recognized with a bronze (100-249 hours), silver (250-499 hours) or gold (500 or more hours) award, depending on the number of hours served.

Laurie Fluit, of Sioux Falls, who works at Citi Bank has made being an ESGR volunteer a priority in her life.

"I have made it my mission," said Fluit, who served 505 hours, earning her the gold award. "I look at our service members and they serve a minimum of one weekend a month, two weeks a year. So I just make it work. I may need to do things before and after work or on the weekends, but this is my way of serving. I feel I am making a difference and that is what volunteering is all about."

Three additional awards were presented in addition to the PVSA.

The Spirit of Volunteerism, awarded to Laurie Fluit, is presented to one state committee member annually by the state chair for the highest level of volunteer service.

The Outstanding SD ESGR Volunteer Award presented to Francie Ruebel-Alberts, of Sturgis, for volunteering 329 hours this past year, earning a Silver PVSA. Her activities included: serving as the SD ESGR awards director; a unit liaison and presenting several Patriot Awards; compiling award packets for state and national level employer awards and staffing tradeshow booths and Soldier Readiness Processing events.

The Outstanding SD ESGR New Volunteer Award presented to Mike Birnbaum, of Rapid City, who is serving in his first year with ESGR. Birnbaum staffed several tradeshow booths and Soldier Readiness Process activities, served as a unit liaison, and filled the critical position of area chair when a volunteer resigned.

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard)



**150206-Z-CW157-001:** South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve State Chair Ron Mielke presents Laurie Fluit, of Sioux Falls, the Gold President's Volunteer Service Award during an ESGR annual planning and awards meeting held in Pierre, S.D., Feb. 6, 2015. Fluit spent more than 500 hours of her personal time to helping employers and service members of the South Dakota National Guard. The PVSA is a way to recognize, celebrate and inspire community service leaders and volunteers. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen/Released)



**150206-Z-CW157-002:** South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve volunteers receive the Silver President's Volunteer Service Award presented to ESGR State Chair Ron Mielke (left), Don Kelpin, Francie Ruebel-Alberts and Robert Mallow during an ESGR annual planning and awards meeting held in Pierre, Feb. 6, 2015. The silver award is awarded to individuals who volunteer 250-499 hours of personal time toward helping employers and service members of the South Dakota National Guard. The PVSA is a way to recognize, celebrate and inspire community service leaders and volunteers. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen/Released)



**150206-Z-CW157-003:** South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve volunteers receive the Bronze President's Volunteer Service Award during an ESGR annual planning and awards meeting held in Pierre, Feb. 6, 2015. The bronze award is awarded to individuals who volunteer 100-249 hours of personal time toward helping employers and service members of the South Dakota National Guard. The PVSA is a way to recognize, celebrate and inspire community service leaders and volunteers. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Tangen/Released)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail [ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil](mailto:ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil).